



How Do We Identify and Guard Against False Teachers and Modern Idolatrous Worship?

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In today's church practice, Christianity tends to be defined by church attendance rather than belief in and faithfulness to the teachings of Christ. It would not be surprising if a good number of the churchgoers are attracted by the search for miracles, prophecies, and solutions to socio-economic problems. Many people would like to hear God [through prophets] speak unto a variety of their passions, especially promising them material wealth, body healing and other flesh desires, but tend to avoid [or sometimes reject] the true teachings. The Apostle Paul prophesied of these times in [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#). As a result, many emerging false prophets and false teachers place too much emphasis on miracles, wonders, and prophecies as a means of attracting followers. The proliferation of false doctrines has transformed people's perception of religious worship, currently dominated by various entertainments supposedly in honor of Almighty God. All these heretical and idolatrous practices and many others are the result of the actions of deceptive spirit, that is, the prophesied false prophet.

If you have had the opportunity to read about the [Antichrist](#) and the [False Prophet](#), it will probably be easy for you to understand the devil's malicious ways of acting in the end times. The many false teachers we have today are the precursors of the one to come as they use the same spirit and, as such, draw their power from the same source. Just as the Antichrist receives the power of the dragon to usher in blasphemy ([Revelation 13:5](#)), the false prophet - being the beast from the earth (coming from the pit of hell) and speaking like a dragon (with the dragon's message at his command)- is given the mission to cause everyone to receive the mark of the beast ([13:16](#)) using signs ([13:13-14](#)). Today we warn you that there are false teachers and false prophets who are arrogantly attempting to fashion new interpretations of the Scriptures in favour of their dragon's command, and to perform miracles and signs as a means of attracting/convincing their followers. Jesus warned us that, if we are not careful, even God's elect will fall victim to their deception ([Matthew 24:23-27](#)).

As believers, the best way to guard against false teachers and false doctrines is to know the truth. We must study the Bible and judge all teaching by the Scriptures. By this we can identify false doctrines and by their fruits we can identify the true versus the false teachers and prophets ([Matthew 12:33](#)). It is not enough to perform miracles or prophesy; we must question the source of this authority. Although we should never doubt God's ability to perform miracles, the Bible makes it clear that we are to seek the truth, not miracles ([Matthew 12:39](#)).

As New Testament miracles served to validate the gospel message and the ministry of the apostles ([Acts 2:43; 5:12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4](#)), the biblical purpose of miracles should give us a certain degree of skepticism regarding reports of modern-day miracles. One thing to admit, however, is the difficulty to spot a false teacher/false prophet. Just as Satan presents himself as an angel of light, so his ministers present themselves as servants of righteousness ([2 Corinthians 11:14-15](#)). Only by study God's Word to know the Truth and allowing ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit can we recognize a counterfeit. Signs and wonders can lead us astray. God's Word will always light the true path ([Psalm 119:105](#)). Speaking of false teachers/prophets, [Jude 1:11](#) warns that *"they have gone the way of Cain, have plunged into Balaam's error for profit, and have perished in Korah's rebellion."* In other words, they can be known by their pride (Cain's rejection of God's plan), greed (Balaam's prophesying for money), and rebellion (Korah's promotion of himself over Moses).

Some of the common behaviours/practices exhibited by the modern false teachers include, but are not limited to, their self-appointment with high titles, arrogant speeches, emphasis on their gift of prophesying, performing miracles through imposition of hands, anointing with oil or what is called the holy water, and by all means, as well as their desire for material wealth and the exchange of their gifts/services for money, to name a few. As Apostle Paul puts it, they prey on spiritually immature people ([Galatians. 1:6-7](#)). Their false teaching, which sometimes stems from a desire for material gain, may be the product of distorted interpretations of Scripture by those who are not firmly established in the truth. Their teachings arise from ungodly ambition, ignorance and vanity ([1Tim.1:6-7](#)) and can lead to inappropriate sensuality and sexual immorality ([Rom. 16:18; 2 Pet. 2:2; Rev. 2:20; Jude 16](#)). It's not surprising that their teaching can come from apostates and deviant teachers within the church. All they seek is to divide the body of Christ ([Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10-11](#)).

What about their influence on the corporate worship?

As a result of a combination of different emerging false doctrines, many churchgoers [especially the younger generations] equate worship with the musical portion of the church service. Sensational music is the sum-total of their worship experience and in some churches, freedom of expression has become an unbiblical worship style. They may call it worship, but where is their heart? Unless the true definition of worship has been reiterated and corporate worship controlled, otherwise Jesus would say: *"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."* ([Matthew 15:8](#) cf. [Isaiah 29:13](#)).

In fact, when musical style and performance become more important than seeking or glorifying God, we are no longer worshipping God. If the rhythm, the words, the arrangement, or the performer take center stage during a time devoted to worship, then Jesus is not the one being exalted: our body satisfaction has become the star. Apostle Paul exhorts us that religious service should not get out of control ([1 Corinthians 14:26-33](#)) so that everything, including personal freedom of worship, should be done *"decently and in order."* ([1 Corinthians 14:40](#)). As participants focus more on their own outward displays of "worship," such as running around the room, shouting, or wildly waving their limbs, the collective gathering has shifted from worshipping God to a competition among uninhibited participants. Christian worship should not be understood as a feel-good exercise filled with comfortable practices or familiar human traditions ([Mark 7:7-8; Colossians 2:8](#)). When we place recreation and pleasure ahead of God, it is idolatry!

One the other hand, this isn't a recommendation to create a dull and gloomy atmosphere, devoid of all emotion. Any worship style can be unbiblical if it is not coming from the heart. It is when our lives are dedicated to honoring God in all that we do that we live a lifestyle of worship. We often fall into the trap of false teachers because we are lovers of self and lovers of pleasure rather than of God ([2 Timothy 3:1-5](#)). Many times, these extra-biblical practices contradict scriptural truths, but are excused because they attract church membership, attendance, emotion-based offerings, but have nothing to do with repentance.

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